SKELETONS OF THE GODS

DARK FANTASY/HORROR STORY

(Here is the audio version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nk5RprPrkiU)

Thousands of years ago, in a certain kingdom in the far south, there lived a man who always wanted more than he had... wanted to be more than he was. His name has been erased from the records, but the wise people who know this story call this man "The Insatiable One."

He was born into a family of servants of a nobleman. His parents trained him from an early age to take their place one day. They always told him, “Look how lucky you are! You could have been a slave on some plantation, but you are a servant in a rich man's house! Moreover, such a good man. He lets us eat the leftovers from his table and only beats us when he gets really angry. You will have a real paradise with him!”

But this young man was not satisfied with the scraps from the master's table. He wanted to have everything his master had... And more. But he had no idea how to get it.

Years passed, the Insatiable One's parents grew old, and he passed out of adolescence. He took his father's place and became the most trusted servant in the house. This gave him access to every nook and cranny of the large household. One day, while cleaning his master's bedroom, he came across a scroll hidden under his pillow. He immediately took it in his hands, unfolded it and began to look through it. He mastered the art of reading enough to understand the general meaning of the written words. And these were extremely significant words. The lord of the house conspired with another nobleman, an aristocrat from an ancient family, against the prince ruling the province!

Insatiable One was shocked, but after a while the feeling turned into excitement. This was the opportunity he had been waiting for for so many years! He could finally rise above his miserable existence... Over the corpse of that wretched, fat pig he had to serve!

The man rushed to the stable and, without asking, took the best horse and forced it to gallop towards the prince's residence. When he reached the fortress, his horse was barely breathing, and the animals's flanks were covered with thick sweat. But the rider had no intention of pitying the creature. He immediately jumped off his horse and ran towards the gates of the fortress.

And there he was stopped by armed guards. The warriors had no intention of letting a stranger into the castle. They declared that if he had any important news for the prince, he should pass it on to them and they would see to it that it reached the ruler's ears. Then the Insatiable One fell into panic. He couldn't give the letter to the guards. After all, they could have taken part in the conspiracy themselves. But even if they were loyal to the prince, it didn't change much. When they warn the aristocrat about the threat, they will receive all the glory - and all the rewards - and the poor informer will be forgotten. He had been so close to exaltation... and now the opportunity might have slipped from his grasp.

Therefore, the Insatiable One began to protest loudly and demand to see the prince. The guards had enough of this and were already starting to force the intruder away when the head of the castle's ruler leaned out of the window of

one of the chambers. "If this man wants to talk to me so badly, let him," said the prince.

Hearing such words, the guards had to bring the newcomer into the castle. And he, assisted by them, marched through the corridors of the fortress. Despite his excitement, he continued to observe his surroundings. He saw riches - works of art on the walls and expensive carpets on the floors. He passed the prince's servants, many of whom were more lavishly clothed than his own master. Of course, he immediately felt the desire to own it all… to rule it all.
But that was the distant future. First, the Insatiable One had to secure a more modest ascension. He stood before the prince. He prostrated himself before the magnate and then handed him a letter informing him of the conspiracy. The aristocrat unfolded the scroll and began to read. At first he frowned. Then he started grinding his teeth. Finally, he rolled the scroll into a ball and threw it aside, while he angrily punched the wall. The Insatiable One feared that the prince's anger would turn on him, but the magnate did not intend to punish the messenger, but the real culprits. He immediately ordered the arrest of all the conspirators. The armed riders moved at every horse's speed to various corners of the principality and the machinations of the traitors were nipped in the bud. And the square in front of the castle was soon decorated with poles on which the participants of the conspiracy - including the former master of the Insatiable One - twisted in agony.

The prince also showed his justice in another way. He gave the household where the Insatiable One was once a servant and the surrounding lands to the man who warned him of the danger. The informer now had a great fortune and a host of servants at his command.

But that wasn't enough for him. He remembered the splendor of the prince's castle. He swore to himself that he would possess it. A plan began to form in his head. Well, the prince was slowly getting older, and he still had no male heir, only a daughter. The Insatiable one knew that whoever took her as his wife would become the heir to the princely title and the splendors associated with it.

But the prince had no intention of marrying his only daughter to a former servant. When the Insatiable One gently suggested this possibility during the conversation, the magnate's face took on an expression almost as stern as when he read the fateful letter. “It is only out of gratitude that I forgive you this insult,” the aristocrat said through his teeth. The Insatiable One bowed and apologized for his impertinence, but he did not abandon the plan. He knew that there was a key that opened even the most closely guarded doors - including the one to the prince's daughter's alcove. And that key was gold.

The Insatiable One devoted the next years to accumulating a fortune. He was looking for every possible business opportunity. He lent money at interest. He raised the tributes imposed on the villagers. He mercilessly exacted high fines for every, even the smallest, offense. But it must be admitted that he did not spare himself either. He tried to eat and dress as modestly as possible and not waste money on luxuries, which helped him increase his wealth faster. The knowledge of the growing mountain in the treasury gave the Insatiable One a certain pleasure. There were times when he would come just to look at its glow. But he still believed that it was just a means to an end.

At the same time, he took some actions to make the prince need money. The Insatiable One devoted a small part of his fortune to arming bands of bandits who began to prowl the prince's domain, burning villages and attacking merchant caravans and tax collectors. The magnate was helpless. He could not trace the bandits' employer, because the cunning vassal contacted the thieves very rarely and only through intermediaries. The Insatiable One did not demand that the robbers give him part of the loot - it was enough for him that they ruined the prince.

And the magnate's financial situation was getting worse and worse. Cut off from

his sources of income, the prince began to look for help in loans. Of course, the Insatiable One came to his aid. He granted loans generously, at high interest, but with a long repayment period. The prince used the funds obtained to deploy more troops to patrol the province - and this drained his treasury even further and forced him to incur further debts.

Finally, it was time to pay off the debts. The Insatiable One presented his patron, and debtor, with numerous promissory notes. Once again he saw the prince angry - but the rage quickly gave way to embarrassment. The magnate was a strict, but also very honorable man. Refusal to fulfill the obligations was not an option. But he simply didn't have the funds to pay off his debts. Fortunately, the Insatiable One had a solution for that.

“Your Highness, give me your daughter as my wife and make me your heir. In this way, debts will be written off. After all, as an heir, I will not collect debts from my own future inheritance.”

The prince thought for a moment and then gave his answer.

“I won't pretend that I like this solution. But I will not pretend that you are not once again a benefactor of my family. Perhaps the fact that you save it from falling again is a sign from the gods that they want you to become its continuator."

Soon the wedding and reception took place. The Insatiable One paid little attention to his young wife's charms. For him, she was just another trophy - and a means to achieve greater honors.

As a princely heir, the Insatiable One vigorously set about fighting the plague of brigandage. And he had an easier task. Without the support of their secret patron, the bandits began to lose strength. And this patron - the Insatiable One himself - knew a lot about his former charges. Thanks to this, he began to destroy their bands - one by one. Sometimes he even led armed men into battle. People in the kingdom began to admire him "He may have been born a servant, but he has the heart of a leader!" – they said. "The old prince couldn't deal with bandits, and this man cleansed the province in no time! This is proof that sometimes it is worth introducing some new blood into old families.”
The Insatiable One couldn't wait to inherit the title and lands. That's why he bought herbs from a suspicious old woman with bright blue eyes as cold as ice, which were supposed to help his father-in-law move to the other world. And so it happened. A bit of powder added to the wine turned the Insatiable One into a new prince... Almost. There was still one formality left - paying official tribute to the king.

The Insatiable One went with his retinue to the capital. He had never seen such a bustling city before. Even the largest stronghold in the princedom could be merely its suburbs. And the royal palace... Every doorknob was made of gold, and the contents of one chamber could buy half of the prince's residence. During the feast, the tables were full of dishes that the Insatiable One had never even heard of before. Like the king, who was bent under the weight of a golden crown and ornaments made of the same metal during the ceremony. Falling on his face before the monarch and then repeating the words of the oath on his knees, the Insatiable One swore to himself that one day he would take his place.
The Insatiable One returned to his castle, and one thought occupied his mind - what to do to become king. He took an oath of allegiance... He didn't feel the need to keep it, and his conscience could easily cope with betrayal. But the remaining vassals would probably prove more loyal to the monarch. Instead of supporting the Insatiable One in the fight for the throne, they would side with the old king.

Then the Insatiable One remembered the glances the king had cast towards his young, beautiful wife. The monarch himself was old, but his wife was even older. No wonder the ruler looked at younger women... For now, he held back his lust. This had to be changed.

From then on, the Insatiable Prince tried to visit the royal court as often as he could. He always took his wife with him. The young princess was pleased with these visits. Her husband treated her harshly and provided no entertainment, so each visit to the palace was a pleasant change for her. The Insatiable One also tried his best to ensure that his wife and the king stayed just the two of them as often as possible. For example, when the royal couple were being shown around the palace garden, the Insatiable One asked the queen, known for her herbal passion, to step aside for a moment and give him advice on an embarrassing issue.

The Insatiable One saw that his actions were bringing results. When too much time passed between one visit and the next, his wife began to ask when they would visit the capital. And when the visit took place, the prince noticed some furtive glances and sometimes even accidental touches between the princess and the king. As for the queen, age had dulled her senses a bit, so she didn't seem to notice anything.

Until the romance finally matured. The king could no longer contain his desires, which his elderly wife could not satisfy. And the princess, neglected by her husband, fell under the monarch's charm. A pair of lovers were found in bed.

The Insatiable One did everything to spread the news of this scandal throughout the kingdom. He had a good reason for this. According to ancient law, adultery between a ruler and a vassal's wife gave the vassal the right to terminate his allegiance to the monarch. The Insatiable One loudly expressed his indignation and portrayed the monarch's meanness in such terrible colors that soon the king began to be perceived in the kingdom as a disgusting lecher and a tyrant who could not respect the family ties of his subjects.

The prince managed to gather several other nobles under his banner and together they started a rebellion. The king was completely surprised by this turn of events. He tried to negotiate to the last. The Insatiable One enticed him with messages and letters giving hope for peace, while he himself marched towards the capital at the head of the army. The rebel troops descended on the city like a hawk on its prey. The royal guard was unable to resist the advancing horde.

The Insatiable One personally beheaded the king in the square in front of the palace, and then placed on his own temples the crown that the cut head once wore. Later, the man sat on the throne. The kingdom was his. But it still wasn't enough. As he looked at the map, he saw that his domain only occupied a small part of the known world. It bothered him. Over the next months, he gathered troops and recruited mercenaries. Blacksmiths across the country worked day and night forging weapons and armor. And finally the day of departure came. The Insatiable one declared war on the surrounding countries. For the next few years he led a major campaign. He clashed with enemy armies in the field, plundered villages and conquered cities. If the blood he spilled had not soaked into the ground, it would have probably flooded the world. His body became covered with scars acquired in various skirmishes. He collected a large collection of crowns and other insignia of power taken from defeated monarchs.

When all the countries on the continent had been conquered, the Insatiable One returned to his capital and declared himself emperor. Celebrations in his honor and in honor of his victories continued throughout the week. It was seven days filled with feasts, balls, tournaments, performances by artists and magicians, and thanksgiving ceremonies. Wine, almost as red as blood, flowed in streams. At night, the light of torches was reflected from the piles of looted treasures, as large as mountains. The world has never seen such a lavish celebration before.
For several weeks the Insatiable One rejoiced in his triumph. He was so happy that he even moved his unfaithful wife from the prison to a proper room as a mercy and honored her with his visits several times.

But soon the familiar anxiety returned. The Insatiable One still wanted to have more than he had, he wanted to be more than he was. The servant became a rich

man, the rich man became a prince, the prince became a king, and the king became emperor. What is left for the emperor? Just one thing. Become a god.

If you like what you read at least a little, please check out my other materials, such as:

- „Twisted Gods" - an article containing suggestions for new deities and religions invented by me - each contains a plot twist that can be used in the scenarios.

- „Tale of the Necromancer" - another dark fantasy/horror story **– audio and text.**

- „Dominion of Darkness" - a cRPG/text strategy game in which you take on the role of a Dark Lord/Lady and strive to conquer or destroy the world using intrigue, black magic or brute force.

The Emperor ordered all the most important priests from the various cults scattered throughout his new empire to be summoned before him and ordered them to proclaim him a god. Many clergy were outraged by this blasphemy. They shouted loudly, invoked the vengeance of the gods and cursed the proud ruler. The emperor ordered them to be taken away and beheaded. Others begged the Insatiable One to abandon his sinful desires and not bring condemnation upon himself. He only ordered these to be flogged. But one of the priests, a follower of a little-known deity from the northern reaches of the empire, an old man dressed in a green robe, really surprised the ruler when he uttered these words: "You want to have more than you have and be more than you are. These are noble desires. They distinguish humans from animals. But you believe that you are entitled to everything, by virtue of your very existence - and therefore in the end you will have nothing."

The emperor took so long to consider these words that the priest managed to leave the throne room before the ruler could have him arrested.

Some of the flogged clergy came to their senses, others were ready to comply with the request immediately. And the Insatiable One replaced those who were beheaded with others, more obedient. Throughout the country, in all temples, prayers began to be offered - not for the emperor, but to the emperor. In every holy place, even the smallest chapel, there were monuments or at least statues of the ruler.

The Insatiable One was pleased. He finally reached his peak. Even the fact that his son was born in the meantime did not give him as much pleasure as this apotheosis.

But this joy did not last. Several months after the announcement of imperial divinity, the Insatiable One happened to fall asleep on his throne. A figure appeared to him in his dream - its outlines were hazy, but one thing stood out clearly - bright blue eyes with a look as cold as ice. The ruler heard a mocking voice: "Do you think you are a god? That's what they call you. But a name does not make an entity. Just like the decree. If you told people to call you a giant, would it make you grow taller? Or if you were called a bird, would you learn to fly? To become a god, you must live like a god."

The Insatiable One woke up and sprang from his throne, looking for the figure that spoke to him, but in his waking state he found none. But her words stuck in his mind. He wasn't a god at all. He had to accept that even his subjects, his alleged followers, bowing and praying, realized deep inside that their emperor was human. Very powerful, maybe even the most powerful in the world, but still human. Not a god.

The emperor again called a meeting with the priests. He asked them a simple, specific question - how can a man become a god. This time, none of the clergy tried to criticize the imperial aspirations, but their replies were in no way helpful. Some talked about gods who had always existed and took part in the

creation of the world. Others about gods who were born that way, as descendants of divine parents. Still others about people who became gods thanks to heroic deeds... but only after death, when they reached the afterlife.

As you can easily guess, neither of these options was avalaible. So the emperor turned to less orthodox advisors. He asked village witches, secret sorcerers, heretical occultists and wandering charlatans. They were more willing to present practical ways to achieve divinity. One of the mystics taught the emperor a meditation technique that required the right way of breathing and maintaining the same body position for several hours. After some time, the Insatiable One was visited by beautiful visions of divine powers... unfortunately, they disappeared immediately after finishing the meditation. However, the back pain persisted for the next few days. In turn, a certain herbalist prepared potion for the ruler. After drinking it, the Insatiable One almost tested for himself the truth of the theory about people becoming gods after death.

The emperor quickly came to the conclusion that this tactic did not make much sense, for a simple reason. If any of these sorcerers knew the true way to achieve godhood, they would have claimed it for themselves long ago. Knowledge about the true apotheosis had to be, by definition, secret and difficult to access.

So the Insatiable One sent his servants around the empire, ordering them to obtain all kinds of books on theology, mysticism, occultism and magic. Messengers searched libraries, temples, and the ruins of fallen civilizations. They bought books, stole them, took them by force. They sent all of them to the capital. And the emperor sat over them and looked through them. But he didn't find a solution.

The Insatiable One spent many years searching for divinity. But he also had to deal with other matters. One day he visited his son while he was being taught by one of the court sages. The emperor ordered that the student and teacher conduct their lesson as usual and pay no attention to him. He himself sat down to the side and, as was his custom, absorbed himself in meditation on the pursuit of divinity.

However, he could still hear fragments of the lecture. Today the sage taught the prince about nature. At one point the boy asked, "Why do we kill and eat animals?" The sage replied, “Beings who are higher in the hierarchy of beings have the right to feed on those who are lower. Animals eat plants and humans eat animals."

The Insatiable One unconsciously repeated the words in his mind, and then suddenly jumped to his feet, shouting "Finally!", much to the surprise of his son and his teacher. Higher beings ate lower ones. Animals ate plants, people ate animals... Therefore, one who ate people was someone higher than man. God. Not just in name, but in nature.

The emperor immediately issued new orders. From then on, criminals sentenced to death were to be sent to the palace kitchen instead of the scaffold. These orders caused outrage among the subjects. Some even rebelled against the cannibal ruler, whom they viewed as a monster. Funny thing - you kill a person and others are willing to accept it. But if you eat it, it is an unforgivable crime for them, although eating it will not harm the deceased. Some of the subjects even dared to take up arms. With force, he suppressed these riots, and the rebels joined the convicts who were sent to the spit or to the cauldron.
Insatiable one ate portions of human flesh and drank blood every day. For several days he was unsure whether this would truly make him a god, but one morning he woke up filled with certainty that he was on the right track. He didn't know what exactly he dreamed, all he remembered was two blue eyes, cold as ice, shining in the darkness. However, the emperor was sure - he had become a god. By absorbing the bodies of ordinary people, he unquestionably proved that he was a higher being than them.

Soon, disturbing news reached the emperor's ears. Other inhabitants of the Empire followed in his footsteps. Hypocrites, and first of all they themselves were outraged at his new menu! Rich people bought the bodies of dead poor people from their families. The poor people attacked their neighbors to devour them. Everyone hoped for divinity. The Insatiable One flew into a rage. If everyone starts eating the divine diet, it will no longer be special. He will no longer be special. He will cease to be a god. If everyone is god, no one is god!

The Insatiable One introduced harsh penalties for cannibals. But this did not stop the new fashion. Of course, it also reached the royal palace. When the emperor heard that one of his stewards was secretly eating human flesh, he decided to punish him as an example. He summoned all the courtiers to the throne room and ordered the guards to bring the chained steward before him. "You dared to take what belongs only to me as a god!" – thundered the Insatiable One. The steward began to beg for mercy, and when the pleas did not calm the emperor's anger, he decided to hand over the other cannibals, pointing to the secretary and the equerry. These two immediately began informing on other courtiers to save their skin. And they released others. And so, with each passing moment, the circle of the accused was expanding. At one point, to his horror, the emperor realized that all his courtiers were man-eaters. Officials and priests, ladies-in-waiting and soldiers. Everyone, from the lowest slave to the highest-ranking ministers. The insatiable one didn't know what to do. He couldn't punish them all, and who would obey this order anyway? The men-at-arms were themselves the culprits.

What's worse, at some point the courtiers themselves realized the situation. Each of them realized that the rest secretly shared his new culinary preferences. There was silence, and all eyes went towards the emperor sitting on the throne. Despite the shackles, the steward raised his hand and pointed at the ruler, saying: "If animals eat plants, people eat animals, and god eats people... What will we become when we eat god?"

A month has passed. The provincial governors began to worry that there had been no news from the capital for many days. They sent their soldiers to check what was happening in the imperial city. When the armed men entered the metropolis, a terrible sight met their eyes. Piles of gnawed human bones. Skeletons of the gods.

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